

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2206

To amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to reauthorize the technical assistance to small public water systems, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 30, 2009

Mr. ETHERIDGE (for himself, Mr. DICKS, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Mr. SKELTON, Mr. TEAGUE, Ms. MARKEY of Colorado, Mr. ORTIZ, Mr. ROSS, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. CARNEY, Mr. JONES, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. HARE, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. PIERLUISI, Mr. PERRIELLO, Mr. FILNER, Mrs. HALVORSON, and Mr. TONKO) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to reauthorize the technical assistance to small public water systems, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Grassroots Rural
5 Water Systems Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drink-
2 ing Water Act authorized technical assistance for
3 small and rural communities to assist them with
4 compliance with rules and regulations promulgated
5 under the Act. Technical assistance and compliance
6 training ensures that Federal regulations do not
7 overwhelm small and rural communities' resources.
8 It also allows small communities lacking technical
9 resources access to assistance necessary to improve
10 and protect their water resources.

11 (2) Under this authorization, locally supported
12 technical assistance initiatives have been operating
13 nationwide for the past three decades and have been
14 the main source of compliance and assistance for
15 small and rural communities to meet federal stand-
16 ards. Without these initiatives, effective implementa-
17 tion of the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean
18 Water Act in rural areas would be nearly impossible.

19 (3) Across the States, over 90 percent of the
20 community water systems serve a population less
21 than 10,000. Small communities have the greatest
22 difficulty providing safe, affordable public drinking
23 water and wastewater services due to limited econo-
24 mies of scale and less technical expertise.

1 (4) In addition to being the main source of
2 compliance assistance, rural water technical assist-
3 ance has been the main source of assistance in emer-
4 gency response in small and rural communities.
5 Rural water technicians were the lead assistance in
6 Greensburg, Kansas, in restoring the drinking water
7 and sanitary sewer service to that tornado-stricken
8 small community (providing water to the temporary
9 hospital, housing units, and to the community in
10 time). This was also the case in the response to the
11 hurricanes in the gulf coast where the hundreds of
12 small and rural communities relied on assistance
13 from the local and surrounding State rural water as-
14 sociations for immediate assistance in restoring
15 drinking water and sanitation service.

16 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

17 It is the sense of the Congress that—

18 (1) to most effectively assist small communities,
19 the Environmental Protection Agency should
20 prioritize the type of technical assistance that small
21 communities find is the most beneficial;

22 (2) it is essential for the agency to consider and
23 prioritize the type and manner of technical assist-
24 ance that has the most support of each State's local
25 communities; and

1 (3) local support is the fundamental key to
2 making the Federal funding (the Federal assistance
3 initiatives) work in small and rural communities to
4 the maximum benefit.

5 **SEC. 4. FUNDING PRIORITIES.**

6 Section 1442(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42
7 U.S.C. 300j-1(e)) is amended as follows:

8 (1) In the fifth sentence by striking
9 “15,000,000” and inserting “20,000,000” and by
10 striking “1997 through 2003” and inserting “2010
11 through 2015”.

12 (2) By inserting “(1)” immediately before the
13 first sentence.

14 (3) By adding the following new paragraph at
15 the end thereof:

16 “(2) The Administrator may provide technical
17 assistance, with funds under this subsection, to non-
18 profit organizations providing on-site technical as-
19 sistance, circuit-rider technical assistance programs,
20 on-site and regional training, assistance with imple-
21 menting source water protection plans, and assist-
22 ance with implementation monitoring plans, rules,
23 regulations, and water security enhancements. To
24 assure technical assistance funding under this sub-
25 section is used in a manner most beneficial to small

1 communities in each State, the Administrator shall
2 give preference to nonprofit organizations that, as
3 determined by the Administrator, are most qualified
4 and most effective, and have the majority of support
5 from small community water systems in the
6 States.”.

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